



Mr. G A R 's
S E R M O N

At the Reverend

Mr. *Jonathan Dorby's*
O R D I N A T I O N.

November 13. 1751.





Mr. G. N. S.

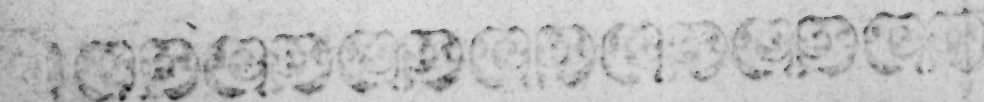
S. E. R. M. O. N.



Mr. J. J. J. J. J.

ORDINATION

Wednesday 13. 1751



6

THE Mystery of the Seven Stars in Christ's right Hand :



Open'd and Apply'd

IN A

S E R M O N

Preached at the ORDINATION

Of the REVEREND

Mr. JONATHAN DORBY,

TO THE

Pastoral Care of the Second Church

IN

S C I T U A T E :

NOVEMBER 13. 1751.

By EBENEZER GAY, A. M. [✶]

Pastor of the First Church in Hingham.

Isai. 60. 1, 2. *Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the Darkness shall cover the Earth, and gross Darkness the People : but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his Glory shall be seen upon thee.*

Rev. 2. 1. — *He that holdeth the Seven Stars in his right Hand ; who walketh in the midst of the Seven Golden Candlesticks.*

B O S T O N : N. E.

Printed and Sold by J. DRAPER, in Cornhill. 1752.

THE MARY & ANNE CHURCHES IN CHURCH STREET, LONDON.

Printed and Sold by J. DAVIES, in Church Street, 1782.

Open'd and Apply'd

IN A

NEW METHOD

Prescribed at the ORDINATION

Of the REVEREND

MR. JOHN WATKINS

Parson of the First Church in Birmingham



By G. I. U. A. T. E.

NOVEMBER 13. 1781.

By ERNEST GAY, A. M.

Parson of the First Church in Birmingham

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted into the Church of St. Mary & Anne, in Church Street, London, since the last year. The names are given in the order in which they were admitted, and are taken from the original registers of the Church.

BOSTON: M. F.

Printed and Sold by J. DAVIES, in Church Street, 1782.

* * * *

THE
 MYSTERY of the Seven STARS
 IN
 CHRIST's Right Hand.

REVEL. I. 16.

AND he had in his right Hand Seven Stars. -----

THE Disciple whom *Jesus* loved had, in a prophetic Vision, more than *St. Austin's* Wish of seeing *Christ* in the Flesh; which was greater and more desireable, than to have seen *Paul* in the Pulpit, or *Rome* in it's Glory. He saw in the midst of seven golden Candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man—Our Lord *Jesus Christ* in an Appearance of human Shape as a Man. Which was a Representation, as the *SCHECHINAH* of old, of his divine Presence in the Churches. The Appearance was very bright and majestick. A Person clothed with a Garment down to the Foot, and girt about the Paps with a golden Girdle.—Not less glorious in his Apparel, as the High-Priest of our Profession, than he was, as a mighty Conqueror, when the Prophet saw him coming from *Edom*, with dyed Garments from *Bozrah*.—His Head and his Hair were white like Wool, as white as Snow—denoting

denoting his perfect Purity.—And his *Goings forth from of old, from everlasting*—“His hoary Head was no Sign of decay ; but it was indeed a *Crown of Glory*,” being always found in the Way of Righteousness. — *And his Eyes were as a Flame of Fire*—An Emblem of his quick and all-piercing Sight, who searcheth the Reins and Hearts.—*And his Feet like unto fine Brass, as if they burned in a Furnace* :—He proceeding in his Work with irresistible Strength, will tread down all his Enemies.—*And his Voice as the Sound of many Waters* :—loud, and full of Majesty, and of Terror unto the Wicked, when he speaks to them in his Wrath !—*And he had in his right Hand seven Stars* :—figurative Representations of the Gifts he hath received for Men.—*And out of his Mouth went a sharp two-edged Sword* :—for the Word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.—*And his Countenance was as the Sun shineth in his Strength* :—equalling, if not exceeding, the Brightness of the Sun at Noon-Day. *Christ's* Face did shine as the Sun in it's full Lustre, not only when he was transfigured before *John* and two other Disciples on Mount *Tabor*, but also when he was represented to him in the midst of seven golden Candlesticks.—A very magnificent Description is this of our blessed Saviour. Each Particular of it might well arrest our Attention, and long employ our Thoughts : But we must at this Time, content ourselves with a transient View of the several Glories of *Christ* here exhibited, and fix our Minds upon One of 'em, which will abundantly furnish us with Matter suitable for our present Meditation. —
He had in his right Hand Seven Stars.

We are to enquire into the Mystery of the *Seven Stars* ; and the Meaning of *Christ's* having them in his right Hand.

I. The Subject of our first Inquiry is, The Mystery of the *Seven Stars* : What we are to understand thereby. And this is plainly declared by him that had them in his Hand, v. 20. of this Chapter. *The Seven Stars are the Angels of the Seven Churches ; and the Seven Candlesticks are the Seven Churches, i. e. of Asia, which are particularly above named. The Seven Stars mystically represented the Angels, i. e. Pastors of those Churches.—Ministers of the Gospel, tho' Men of like Passions with others by Nature, are Angels by Office.—The Messengers of the Lord, sent forth to minister unto those who shall be Heirs of Salvation. And as the Angels of Heaven are called Stars, Job. 38. 7. so likewise are the Angels of the Churches : And that fitly ; —*

Ist. In regard of the *Eminence* of their Place. *Behold the Height of the Stars, how high they are ? ** It is a high Place which Ministers have in the *Firmament* of the Church : An Office of special Dignity which they are rais'd to. Their Place is between God and the People. They are taken nearer to Him, in a peculiar Relation, and superior Employment. They are *the Servants of the Lord*, so styled by way of excellency ; his more immediate Attendants ; do approach his Person in religious Addresses, and are the People's Mouth to God by Prayer, as well as God's Mouth to them by Preaching. They are *Ambassadors for Christ*, to manage his Concernments, and in a manner represent his Person ; do speak and act in his Stead †. Their Ministry is therefore a Preferment ; their Calling high and heavenly. This Honour have not all the Saints ; and no Man should take it to himself, but he that is called of God, as was *Aaron* ‖. Divinity is the Queen of Sciences : A Profession in itself, and in the Estimation of all that are wise, the most noble : However Men pour Contempt upon it, and count those as

* Job 22. 12. † 2 Cor. 5. 20. ‖ Heb. 5. 4.

the Filth of the World, and the Dirt under their Feet, whom *God hath ordained Stars*. They are indeed as Men, *formed out of the Clay*, and in as low a State as others; but as Ministers of God, are raised above them in some Endowments and Prerogatives. And to deny or despise this Advancement, in the *Order of the Gospel*, argues gross Ignorance, or prophane Haughtiness of Mind: While to assert it, may seem Pride and Vanity in the priviledg'd Subjects of it. But they may and should magnify their Office, without vaunting and exalting themselves. In their high Station Ministers are to be very humble and condescensive. The Stars in their Height shew a thousand times less than really they be. An Affectation of Grandeur; an Ostentation of Gifts and Graces, and Performances, is very unbecoming the Ministers of *Christ*, who saith to them, *He that is greatest among you, shall be your Servant*. And People should not envy the Eminence of the ministerial Order, and say as *Corah* and Company did to *Moses* and *Aaron*, Numb. 16. 3. *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the Congregation of the Lord?* None would be proud of, nor envious at, such a Place in the Church, did they rightly apprehend the Danger of it proportionable to the Dignity of it: And if by Transgression any with *Judas*, fall from it, 'twill be into the greater Contempt and Misery. Wo to any of us, that shall incur *Capernaum's* Doom, and after we have been lifted up to Heaven, be cast down to Hell; and be there upbraided and insulted in such Language as that of the Prophet, *Isai. 14. 12. How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning?*

2^{dly}. In regard of the *Light* of their Doctrine, Ministers are Stars. The Stars are the brighter Parts of the ætherial Heaven, and do shine even unto the Earth.

True

True Ministers of the Gospel excel in Knowledge, and shine in Doctrine, imparting the Light of divine Truth unto others, for the Illumination of their Minds, and the Direction of their Practice. *Ye are the Light of the World* *, said Christ to the first Preachers of his Gospel: And all who succeed them, are in their measure so. Their Office is to teach: to shew unto Men the Way of Salvation:—to open the Scriptures clearly, and expound the Way of God perfectly to them. Every good Minister of *Jesus Christ* is, in a Degree, as his Fore-runner was, *a burning and a shining Light*, to give Knowledge of Salvation unto his People, by the Remission of their Sins, through the tender Mercy of our God, whereby the *Day-spring* from on high hath visited us, to give Light to them that sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death, to guide our Feet in the Way of Peace †.

The bright *Morning-Star*, and all the other *Planets*, shine but with a borrowed Light: They only reflect on us the Light which the Sun casts on them.—All the Light of heavenly Truth, of spiritual and divine Knowledge, that Ministers impart to others is received by them from *Christ*, the *Sun* of Righteousness, and Fountain of Light, 1 Cor. 11. 13. *I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you.*—The Lord giveth the *Sun* for a Light by Day, and the Ordinances of the *Moon* and of the *Stars* for a Light by Night ‥. The Stars shine only in the Night. It is only in this dark and benighted World, that Ministers are of use, and do serve to the enlightning of Souls: Tho' in respect of the Glory, which, if they are wise and faithful, they shall attain to, they will shine as the Stars forever in the heavenly World; yet in respect of the Benefit of their Light, which is here so much wanted, they shall there cease to shine, for the *cœlestial City*, which hath no need of the *Sun*, nor of the *Moon*, certainly hath not of these Stars to shine in it;

* Mat. 5. 14. † Luke 1. 77. ‥ Jer. 31. 35.

for the Glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof. The Light of these Stars will be absorpt in that World, where the Sun of Righteousness shineth in all his Glory. In comparison of the Light which the Church shall enjoy in Heaven, it is Night with it on Earth. It is no more than Star-light,—a little glimmering Light: We see darkly, and know but in part. That is applicable to the Gospel, and the present Ministry of it, which the *Apostle* saith, in 2 *Pet.* 1. 19. *We have a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well, that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your Hearts.* The Gospel, ministred by Men, is a Light that shineth in this dark World. We should take heed to it, walk in it, and act by it. The Day-spring from on high hath visited us, by *Christ's* coming in the Flesh, and finishing the Revelation of God to Men: The Day-Star begins to arise in our Souls, when he savingly visits them with his Light and Grace. But then is a perfect Day of heavenly and eternal Light of which that is the early Dawning, or Forerunner: a glorious Day, which the Gospel, and the Ministry of it, are appointed to usher in.

3^{dly}, In respect of the *Influence* of their Authority and Example, Ministers are Stars. The Stars are supposed to shed down their Influences, as well as reflect Light on the Earth. Those are secret and invisible. Their Light is seen, but their Operations (whatever they be) are not perceived by us. God speaks of these among his wonderful, unsearchable Works, *Job* 38. 31. 'Canst thou bind the sweet Influences of *Pleiades*? or loose the Bands of *Orion*? Canst thou bring forth *Mazaroth* in his Season? or canst thou guide *Arcturus* with his Sons? Knowest thou the Ordinances of Heaven? Canst thou set the *Dominion* thereof on the Earth'. So far was *Job* from being able to order and direct, to restrain or cause the Influences of the Stars, that he could not tell what,

what, or how great, they were. Nor may all the Improvements of Science, since his Time, shew us the Nature and Manner; the Extent and Degree of 'em. Tho' Philosophy hath not describ'd the Rule which the Stars have over terrestrial Bodies, yet the Gospel hath settled the *Government of Christ's Ministers in his Churches*, — ordained them to have a spiritual, pastoral *Rule* over the People; and enjoyn'd the People's Obedience and Submission to them in the Lord. What their Authority is, and how they are to exercise it, may be learn'd from *Christ's Words to Peter*, in Mat. 16. 19. *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* They are constituted *Stewards* of God's House, to open the Door of Entrance thereinto unto the duely qualified, and to shut it against the unworthy and prophane. They have Power to bind on Earth, not by imposing any Thing as Duty upon Men, which the evangelical Law doth not Command, but by declaring what that obliges them to, and calling them in the Name of *Christ* to perform it. They have Power to loose, not such as the romish *High Priest* claimeth of granting *Dispensations*, but to assert and maintain our *Christian Liberty*. They are to bind by retaining, and loose by remitting, of Sins. Joh. 20. 23. *Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever Sins Ye retain, they are retained.* They remit and retain Sins, by declaring and applying the Promises and Threatnings of the Word; the former to the Penitent, and the latter to the Impenitent: And by administering the Sacraments and Censures of the Gospel.— They have Authority from *Christ* to do such Things for the Edification of his Churches; and the due Exercise of it, hath a great Influence into the well-being and flourishing of them. Ministerial Authority is not to be despised as an empty Name, an insignificant Power, a Shadow without Sub-

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stance, because there is no external Force to abet it, or to avenge Disobedience to it. The Influences of the *Pleiades* are not sweeter or more powerful, than those of the mild and gentle Administration of *Elders that rule well* and wisely : Nor are the Bands of *Orion* stronger, than those with which they bind contumacious Offenders, so as not to be easily loosed therefrom. Great also is the Influence of Minister's Example upon the Minds and Consciences and Actions of Men : And unless it be good, their Doctrine, how true and clear soever, will not lighten them to Heaven. Their vicious Practice will be of more force, to lead People astray, than all their persuasive Preaching to bring them into the Way of Life.— The Summer-fruitfulness, or Winter-barrenness of the Church ; it's peaceful, or troubled, it's healthful or sickly State, may depend as much on the Lives of Ministers, as the various Seasons of the Year, and Circumstances of Men, do on the Starry-Heaven, whose Dominion God hath set in the Earth.

4^{thly}, In respect of the regular and constant *Course* of their Ministrations, the Angels of the Churches are Stars. There is exquisite Order among the Stars : They keep in their proper Orbs, move in their proper Spheres, accomplish their appointed Courses, perform their constant Revolutions with the greatest Certainty and Exactness. This is such a clear and incontestible Proof of One original Being, the divine Architect and Ruler of the Universe, as made the Roman *Philosopher* with good Reason conclude, “ That whoever thinks, that the wonderful Order, and incredible Constancy of the heavenly Bodies, and their Motions (whereupon the Preservation and Welfare of all Things depend) is not governed by an intelligent Being, Himself is to be accounted void of Understanding. ” The orderly Behaviour of wise and faithful Ministers in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God ; their regular

gular and steady proceeding in, and finishing their appointed Courses, may be fitly compared to the Regularity and Constancy of the Motions of the Stars, without any deviation or confusion: And 'tis, in like manner, necessary and useful. If the Stars did not keep in their Orbs, but wander up and down uncertainly, how could Passengers by Sea, or Land, be directed by them? If Ministers are *wandering Stars* *, wild and rambling in their Discourses, unstable in all their Ways, excentrick and retrograde, how shall People, in their difficult Passage to Heaven, take any sure and safe Direction from them? If the Stars should cross one another's Motions and jostle one against another, what Confusion would the heavenly Systems be thrown into?—Such as the Churches are, when the Pastors are envious toward, and do counter-work one another.—These imperfect Hints may shew us the Resemblance betwixt Ministers and Stars.— We proceed,

II. To enquire into the Meaning of *Christ's* having these Stars in his *right Hand*.

1st. It signifies that they are some of his most valuable Gifts to the Churches. As the Purchase of his Death, and in Consequence of his Ascension, our Lord received a rich Variety of Gifts, — Gifts of all Sorts and Degrees, for Men, yea, for the Rebellious. But in the *Apostle's* Enumeration of 'em, he mentions only the Ministerial, as being of principal Worth and Use, Eph. 4. 11. *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ. Pastors and Teachers* are as truly the Gifts of *Christ*, as *Apostles* and *Prophets*; and are in his *right Hand*, as being of special Worth and Advantage: — more excellent and precious Gifts, than many other good Things which he

* Jude Ver. 13.

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bestows. They have the precedence in his right Hand : As *Length of Days is in Wisdom's right Hand ; and in her left are Riches and Honour*, Prov. 3. 16. *Joseph* presumed that *Manasseh*, his first-born, would have the Preheminence in the Blessing of his Father *Jacob* ; and therefore brought him to his *right Hand*. But the good Patriarch, tho' blind, fore-seeing by the Spirit of Prophecy, that the Younger of the Lads would be greater, be more favoured and blessed of God than the Elder, to signify this, stretched out his *right Hand*, and laid it on *Ephraim's* Head, Gen. 48. 14. The Hands which *Jesus* lifteth up to bless us *, are full of Blessings ; Blessings of all kinds, which he hath to confer upon his People : And in his *right Hand* are *Pastors* and *Teachers*. These are some of his choicest Gifts to them. The *Lord* is spoken of as being very gracious to his People in the vouchsafement of such spiritual Gifts to them, while he does withhold those which are temporal and bodily : Isa. 30. 20. *Tho' the Lord give you the Bread of Adversity, and the Water of Affliction, yet shall not thy Teachers be removed into a Corner any more, but thine Eyes shall see thy Teachers ?*

2^{dly}, It imports their being absolutely in his Power, intirely at his Disposal, and under his Direction : As any Thing is which a Man hath in his Hand ; especially in his *right Hand*, which is usually the stronger, and by which he has the greater Command of what he takes into it, and more easily doth what he pleaseth. *Christ*, who is Head over all Things to the Church, hath the Stars in his right Hand, being the Ruler of them. They are all his Servants.— *He telleth the Number of them, and calleth them all by their Names*. He assigns them their proper Place in the *Heaven* of his Church, according as it's various Needs require, and their different Qualifica-

* Luke 24. 50.

tions Suit: 1 Cor. 12. 28. *He hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers.* These Stars rise and set at his Command; shed forth their Light and Influence when, and where, and in what measure, he ordereth them. He *sealeth up* these Stars, *looketh to them, and they shine not, and bindeth their sweet Influences,* at his Pleasure.

3^{ly}. It denotes his honouring of them. The right Hand excelling in Strength, is more honorable than the left: 'Tis a Mark of Respect to be placed at it, and held in it. *Christ himself hath God exalted with his right Hand,* a Prince and Saviour to give Repentance to *Israel*, and Forgiveness of Sins; and his Ministers doth *Christ* exalt with his *right Hand*, to preach Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins in his Name. As Christ's Advancement it exprets'd by his being at the *right Hand of God*, so is their's signified by their being in the *right Hand of Christ*. People are sometimes for having them under their Feet. St. Paul, speaking of the Treatment which he and his fellow-Apostles met with, saith, *We are made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all Things unto this Day* *. The two Words setting forth the contemptuous Usage of Christ's Ministers, are of the same Import, and both emphatical, denoting that which is most vile, and trodden under Feet by all Men. But however Men despise and degrade, with how much Contempt soever they trample on the faithful Ministers of the Gospel, yet Christ honoureth them with his *right Hand*. Tho' their Brethren may cast *them out as evil*, and the unworthiest of all Creatures, yet their Lord *boldeth them in his right Hand*, as a Man doth that which is peculiarly dear unto him. *The Lord hath graven Zion on the Palms of his Hands* ||. These precious Sons of Zion on the Palm of his right Hand.

* 1 Cor. 4. 13. || Isa. 49. 16.

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4^{thly}. It implies *Christ's* upholding, strengthening, protecting, and prospering them. The right Hand, often attributed to God in Scripture, signifies his divine Power exerted for such Purposes.— This *Christ* employs for the sustaining, strengthening, defending, and succeeding of his faithful Ministers : They are in that right Hand which upholds all Things, and is able to keep them from falling ; — In that right Hand which can do every Thing ; make *their Bow abide in Strength, and the Arms of their Hands to be strong* : — In that Hand out of which none can pluck them.— That Hand that wieldeth and moderateth all Things, and will over-rule all to their Safety and Salvation. — In that right Hand which doeth great Things by them, as Instruments in it : getteth the Victory over *Christ's* Enemies, and maketh *his People willing in the Day of his Power*.— *The Hand of the Lord*, which when it was with the primitive Preachers of the Gospel, a *great Number believed, and turned unto the Lord*. * —

— Thus much is suggested to our Thoughts, by *Christ's* having the Stars in his right Hand.—

And now, this Part of *John's* Vision being made so plain, that he *may run, that reads it*, it may be profitable, if we *apply* it,

1. To our Instruction in the Work of the Ministry ; the whole Duty of those who are employ'd in it.

As Stars, they are to shine in their Doctrine, to the enlightning of the Minds, and directing the Ways of Men. In order to which, they need themselves be irradiated with the Light of spiritual and divine Knowledge ; for how shall they impart this to others if they have not received it themselves ? An ignorant Teacher is as great a *Solecism*, and as useless a Thing in the Church, as a dark

* Acts 11. 21.

Star wou'd be in the Sky. Ministers ought to have a good Degree of Knowledge above the common Sort, who are to be taught by them. Mal. 2. 7. *The Priests Lips should keep Knowledge.* — He should be a kind of Repository or Treasury of it, and have wherewith to supply the Wants of others. — And *they should seek the Law at his Mouth* : have recourse to him for Instruction in their Duty. Our divine Teacher hath excellently expounded that Text, in Mat. 13. 52. *Every Scribe that is instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, — i. e. who is prepared to preach the Gospel — is like a Man that is an Householder, which bringeth forth out of his Treasure Things new and old.* He must have a good Store of Learning, human and divine, ancient and modern, laid in by preparatory Study, who would be as a Householder that treasureth up all Sorts of Provisions for the Maintenance of his Family, and the Entertainment of his Guests: Ministers Preaching should be illuminating, and give Light to them that are in Darkness. 'Tis *vain*, if it be obscure and unintelligible, as to the Matter and Manner of it. If they be themselves clouded with Ignorance, and are unable and unapt to teach, they should not have the Place, for they cannot perform the Office of Stars. In vain do they move the Passions, and heat the Imaginations of Men, without informing their Judgments. Their Doctrine should resemble the Light in Purity, as well as Perspicuity ; be free from all heterogeneous Mixture, — the Truth they preach be like the God of it, who is *Light, and in whom is no Darknefs at all.* To this end they are obliged to take heed to their Doctrine, that there be nothing in it but what is agreeable to the Nature and Reason of Things, and the Oracles of God, whatever there should happen to be contrary to human Schemes, and commonly received Opinions. They may not teach for Doctrine the *Commandments* of Men, who are called *Masters* ; nor speak as pleasing those who are apt to be offended at the Light, which discovers them

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to be wrong in their Sentiments and Actions. Isa. 8. 20. *To the Law, and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them.* And 'tis pity any Man, at his Entrance into the Ministry, should, in his *Ordination-Vows*, get a Snare to his Soul, by subscribing, or any ways engaging to preach according to another *Rule of Faith, Creed* or Confession, which is meerly of human Prescription and Imposition.

As Stars, Ministers shou'd with the sweet Influence of their Authority and Example, incite and attract People to their Duty. The Authority given them is for *Edification*, and not for *Destruction*: and the Exercise of it should resemble the *Dominion* of propitious Stars, which is not by way of violent Impression, but of gentle and wholesome Influence. They are not allowed to *lord it over God's Heritage*, but to rule with Equity and Clemency, in meek and gentle Ways, directly influential on the Mind and Conscience (Ways of rational Conviction, Persuasion, Exhortation, Admonition, Reproof,) using only the *Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*, in *revenging all Disobedience*, and cutting off a Member from the *Body of Christ*.

The Light of their *good Works* must shine before Men, to render that of their Doctrine incentive, as well as directive, of all christian good Practice; and to support their Authority, and procure them the *double Honour*, of which the *Elders* that rule well are to be counted worthy. That they may light others to Heaven, they need go before them in the Way to it. If the Guides go astray, they cause the People to err. If their Lives be spotted with any scandalous Sin, or Immorality, *the Light that is in them is Darkness, and how great is that Darkness?* " A Priest (saith one) that is not cloathed with Righteousness, tho' otherwise richly adorned with all the Ornaments of human and divine Literature, and
this

this gilded over with the Rays of Seraphic Prudence and Sagacity, is yet but a naked and despicable Creature, of no Authority, no Interest, no Use, or Service in the Church of God. "

As Stars, Ministers are to proceed in their Work orderly, steadily, constantly, till they have finished their Course ; never with-holding their Light and Influence from any, as the Stars do not their's, even from the Dogs that bark at them, and Men that curse them— Never going out of their Line, and crossing others Spheres, obtruding others Usefulness, and disturbing the Harmony of the Church's Peace. *Wandering Stars* have been look'd upon as ominous Appearances, and to portend ill.

2. People should hence learn, how to value and improve the Blessing of a Gospel-Ministry — to esteem it such a Blessing to them, as the Stars are to the World ; and make use of it for their spiritual Illumination, and sure Direction, in their Passage to Heaven. What a Relief doth it afford us against the Darknefs which hath covered the Earth, and the gross Darknefs upon most People ! If the Light of natural Reason be in itself sufficient to guide Men in the Way of their Duty to a State of future Happiness, yet it is so universally obscured by the Prevalence of moral Corruption, that those Places may well be called *Regions of Darknefs*, where the Light of the glorious Gospel doth not shine. What a sad Condition were the Mariners and Passengers with *Paul* in, when *neither Sun nor Stars in many Days appeared, and no small Tempest lay on them, all hope that they should be saved was taken away* *. In a very dangerous, if not as desperate a Case are they, who are without the Light of the Gospel, which the spiritual

* Acts 27. 20.

Stars give in the troubled Sea of this World, where the Storms of Passion and Winds of Temptation threaten the eternal Shipwreck of Souls. Let them be pitied, and prayed for by us, that the Light may shine unto them, that *GOD's Way and saving Health be known among all Nations*. And how thankful should they be who are visited with the Day-spring from on high, according to the tender Mercy and distinguishing Grace of God? *Mat. 4. 15, 16. "The Land of Zebulon, and the Land of Neptbalim, by the Way of the Sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The People which sat in Darkness saw great Light: And to them which sat in the Region and Shadow of Death, Light is sprung up."*

"We have more Reason to bless God for the Gospel of Christ, and the Knowledge of the Way of Salvation thereby, than for the Luminaries of Heaven: If these were this Hour put out, and the Heavens passed away as a Scroll, this would not be an equal Loss to any Child of God, as for him to have missed of the Dispensation of the Gospel: That were only present Death to the Body, this eternal Death to the Soul."

God's Covenant with Believers, is more than all the Ordinances of Heaven: These are but a Shadow of the Stability of that. — But then, People must take heed that they deprive not themselves of the Benefit of the Stars, which shed forth so comfortable Light and Influence. And this they do, when they are blinded with Prejudice, and besotted with stupid Ignorance, and that is verified in them which we read in the Gospel, *The Light shineth in Darkness, and the Darkness comprehended it not. — This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd.* Prepossessions, Pride, Worldliness, and the like, bar the Entrance of Light into Men's Understandings, and obstruct the Influence of it upon

upon their Hearts and Lives : And hereby they may provoke a holy and jealous God to say unto his Messengers, *Go, shut the Eyes of this People, — lest they see with their Eyes, and be converted :* Or to execute upon them that Threatning in *Is. 13. 10. The Stars of Heaven, and the Constellations thereof shall not give their Light.* — And in *Ezek. 32. 7, 8. I will cover the Heaven, and make the Stars thereof dark : — All the bright Lights of Heaven will I make dark over thee, and set Darknes upon thy Land, saith the Lord God.* — May it never be the Case of his People in this Land, that their Ingratitude for and Misusage of a learned and faithful Ministry, should be punished with One that by pernicious Errors in Doctrine and Disorders in Practice shall have a most malignant Influence upon them ; like that of the great Star which *John* 'saw fall from Heaven, burning as it were a Lamp, and it fell upon a third Part of the Rivers, and upon the Fountains of Waters ; and the Name of the Star is called *Wormwood* : and a third Part of the Waters became Wormwood ; and many died of the Waters, because they were made bitter. ' * The Heresy of the *Gnostic's* who taught such as is most damnable, even that of a bad Life, is (as good Interpreters suppose) called a *Root of Bitterness*, in *Heb. 12. 15.* And Christians are admonished to look diligently lest any such springing up, trouble them, and thereby many be defiled.

3. Behold the Greatness and Glory of *Christ*, represented by his having the Stars in his right Hand. How glorious was the Lord, when he came from *Sinai*, and rose up from *Seir*, and shone forth from Mount *Paran*, and he came with ten thousands of Saints : from his right Hand went a fiery Law, *Deut. 33. 2.* A more glorious Gospel proceedeth from his right Hand in which *John* saw the seven Stars : The Interpretation of which

* Rev. 8. 10.

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exhibits a greater Glory to the admiring View of a spiritual Understanding, than that in which the SCHECHINAH of old appeared.

Christ saith of himself, *I am the bright and Morning Star.* That is the brightest in our Hemisphere. For it's Lustre the Heathens named it *The Goddess of Beauty.* *Jesus Christ* excels all in Beauty and Brightness ; — is fairer than the Children of Men ; higher than the Angels of God, those Morning Stars of the Empyrean Heaven. The most glittering Star is but a faint Resemblance of him. The Stars of the greatest Magnitude, how little are they in Comparison of him ? and how dim is their Light, if it be not lost, in his ? His right Hand spanneth the Heavens, and hath in it all the Stars thereof. He made, and he ruleth them : 'Tis with the Rays of his Light they shine, and by his Power that they are of such benign Influence. All the Benefit received from *Christ's* Ministers, is by vertue of his Grace in them, and with them. 2 Cor. 8. 23. *They are the Messengers of the Churches, and the Glory of Christ.*

4. Let Ministers here see, and be very sensible of, their Dependence on *Christ*. Are they called Stars ; yea, Angels ? Doth not the *Holy Ghost* judge these Names too great and honourable for Dust and Ashes, — for Men that dwell in Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the Dust : Yet let them not be exalted above Measure. How heavenly and angelical soever they may be in their sparkling Light, kindly Influences, and spiritual Ministrations ; yet it is *Christ's* right Hand that hath raised, and doth uphold them. Did it not so, how soon would they fall from Heaven, as *Lucifer*, Son of the Morning ? And how great and dreadful their Fall from the mystical Heaven into a real Hell ; and the lowest and darkest Pit of it ! Did not *Christ's* unerring Hand guide them, they would prove *Wandering Stars* to whom

whom is reserved the Blackness of Darkness forever. It is only *Christ's* right Hand that is able to keep the best of them from falling into those Errors and Sins, which would very much darken them, and destroy their Usefulness in the World. Rev. 12. 3, 4. *There appeared another Wonder in Heaven, and behold a great red Dragon, having seven Heads, and ten Horns, and seven Crowns upon his Heads. And his Tail drew a third Part of the Stars of Heaven, and did cast them to the Earth.* The Devil's Enmity against the Church makes him especially and most industriously to seek the Down-fall of it's Pastors, to cast them from the Orbs in which they are set, and do shine, and cover them with Obscurity in the Earth; to cause them to fall from their high Station, and heavenly Profession, into the Dirt of Earthly-mindedness, and an abject carnal Course of Life, which may render them vile and useless. And many are the base Arts and Instruments he useth to this Purpose: And he always would be successful therein, did not the *Lord Jesus* hold the Stars in his right Hand. Psal. 17. 7. "Shew thy marvellous Loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right Hand them that put their Trust in thee, from them that rise up against them."

5. Hath *Christ* the Stars (who are the Angels of the Churches) in his right Hand? then ought People to hold them in Reputation. They are not to be worshipped, as the literal Stars have been by ignorant and idolatrous People; nor their Persons to be had in Admiration; yet are they to be highly esteemed in Love, for their Works sake; since the *Lord Jesus Christ* puts such Honour upon, manifests such Respect, and affords such Protection to them, as to hold them in his right Hand. They are the Church's Crown. Rev. 12. 1. *There appeared a great Wonder in Heaven, a Woman clothed with the Sun, and the Moon under her Feet, and upon her Head a Crown of twelve Stars.* The twelve Apostles, with.

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with their Successors, are as so many Jewels in the Crown of the Christian Church, here represented in the midst of a Glory far surpassing the Dress of any of the Heathen Virtues, or Deities,—— a Glory made by the Beams of the Sun, and upon the Moon, as above the low Condition of this sublunary World, shining round about (as Mr. Mede expounds it) by the Faith of *Christ*, the Sun of Righteousness, treading under-foot the Rudiments of the World, whether *Jewish* Shadows, or *Gentile* Superstitions, and glorious with the Ensigns of the apostolical Offspring. The Contempt of the Clergy then is a Violation of the Church's Crown, and spoiling a principal Ornament on her Head. And 'tis pity but that her Children did more honour her. If Ministers are of a sordid and groveling Spirit, ignorant and vicious, they are very despicable Creatures indeed, but if they behave themselves worthy of their eminent Place, and act up to their illustrious Character, it is a discredit and hurt to Religion, to depress them into low Life, and cover them with Disgrace. Let no Man despise those whom the King of Kings delighteth to honour.— Such a Caution will be ill taken by none, but those who need it.

6. Hath *Christ* the Stars in his right Hand ? Then from him the Benefit of their Light and Influence must be sought ; and to him the Praise of it return'd. He is the true Light, that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World. The Stars in his Hand shine with a vicarious Light ; with borrowed Rays from him, which he can withhold from them, as he pleases ; and how clearly soever they reflect the same upon others, yet none will be savingly illuminated thereby, unless he open their Understandings, and shine in their Hearts, giving them the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. The ablest Ministers of the *New-Testament* are only Instruments in his Hand of doing this for his People. And if they look not to his right Hand for the

the Accomplishment of this glorious Work in them, justly may he *seal up the Stars* which are therein, and *bind* their sweet and salutary Influences. When he useth them for the effectual enlightning and guiding Souls in the Way to Heaven, not unto them, but to him, is the Praise due. The Success of the preached Gospel is not to be ascribed to Men, how learned, pious and faithful soever, but to the *saving Strength* of Christ's right Hand.

7. Are the Stars in Christ's right Hand? Then let them shine to his Glory:—Not to be themselves gazed at by the simple Multitude,—(Aët. 3. 12. *Why look ye so earnestly on us?*)—But to direct all to *Christ*, that they may believe in, worship and serve him: As the Star which was a Guide to the *wise Men of the East*, to come and pay their due Homage to him newly incarnate. *Mat. 2.* 'Tis conjectur'd, that the Prophecy of *Balaam*, one of the Children of the East, concerning a *Star* that should rise out of *Jacob*, was kept upon Record among the oriental *Archives*, and gave Occasion to the *Magi*, upon the Discovery of an unusual Star over the Land of *Judea*, to go and make Enquiry after him that was *born King of the Jews*. That Star gave Notice to the neighbouring Nations of the Birth of *Jesus*, and by the Light of it those *Sages* found him. Happy is it when Ministers are like that Star, which was a Guide to those Travellers, going before them, till it came and pointed them to the very Place where the Saviour CHRIST was.—If the Stars in the Firmament of the Church do glitter and sparkle, only to draw Observance to themselves; to gain the poor Advantage of Admirers and Followers of themselves, *Christ* will not hold them in his right Hand; he will cast them out of his Care and Protection; yea, will put them under his *Feet of Brass*, and stamp them down to the Bottom of Hell.—But if they shine to the Glory of *Christ*, seek not their own, but the Things of *Jesus Christ*, and faithfully guide Souls to him and

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Heaven, they shall always be in his right Hand,—eternally loved, and honoured, and saved of him. *Dan. 12. 3.* *They that be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.*

Having now open'd and apply'd the Vision of the Stars in the right Hand of Him whom *John* saw amidst the Golden Candlesticks : What shall I say further to assist and encourage a *beloved Brother*, in the solemn Dedication he is this Day making of himself to the Service of the Sanctuary ?

These Things (*Dear Sir*) had undoubtedly been set before you in a stronger Light, if your Choice of One to be your *Monitor* on this Occasion had been guided more by Judgment, than immerited Affection. But, as they are propos'd, and the Vision brings 'em in View, it fills your whole Soul with Admiration at the Grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to see the Dignity of the Office in his Church, the Eminence of the Place, to which he is advancing You ; — That of an Earthen Vessel, he should make a Lamp of Heaven !—Should take a Piece of Clay, such as Man is formed out of, and convert it into a luminous Star ! When, with the devout *Astronomer* in *Pf. 8.* You consider the Heavens — the Stars which God hath ordained, and to which Ministers are compared ; Your Heart feels *David's* Transport of Wonder and Gratitude, and your Tongue is ready to break forth into his rapturous Language ; *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him ?*—Raising him to such Honour—making him (in so high a State and Employment) a little lower than the Angels ? I thank Christ *Jesus* our Lord (said the great Apostle *Paul*) who enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry. —And again, *Unto me, who am less than the least of all Saints,*

Saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ.

The Representation made to your Mind of the Work of the Ministry, in it's various Branches, peculiar Difficulties, and awful Consequences, excites your anxious Concern, and makes you enter upon it with Fear and Trembling, lest you should fail of imparting that Light and Influence, and proceeding so regularly and constantly in the Sphere of your Duty, as may be, in some good Measure, answerable to the important Character of a coelestial Luminary. You can't without Horror think of one Soul's being finally lost in Error and Sin, thro' your Want of Knowledge or Faithfulness, in shewing unto Men the Way of Salvation : Nor do you apprehend the Case, as to yourself, will be much less sad and dreadful, if, after your instructive Preaching hath lighted others into the Kingdom of Heaven, you should be cast into outer Darkness.

But it relieves your affrighted Spirit, to behold the Stars in the right Hand of Christ ; and to hope in his Goodness, which he expressed to his beloved Servant *John*, struck by his majestic Appearance with great Awe, and fallen at his Feet as dead :—*He laid his right Hand upon him, saying, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the Keys of Hell and of Death.* * So may he put Strength into you, and encourage you with the Assurance of his redeeming you by his Death ; and of his living to protect, and guide, and save you with his right Hand. We trust (tho' you must strictly examine whether it be so) that *the Love of Christ constraineth* you to be a Minister of his Gospel. There is (as the Times are) no Inducement from this World thereto ; and tho' the Reward of the

* Context, v. 17, 18.

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next, for him that is faithful, be a weighty Motive, yet the great Difficulty and Hazard of attaining it, would preponderate in every thoughtful Mind, that is not touched with the Love of CHRIST. As this inclines you to undertake the sacred and tremendous Office, so let it be the animating Principle of all that you do in the Execution of it. Then may you be sure of the constant Aid of *Christ's* right Hand. — Little (*Sir*) can be expected by you from the *Right Hand of our Fellowship*, which we are ready with all our Hearts to give unto you:—Look to, and always depend on, the right Hand of *Christ's* Strength, which is sufficient to uphold, to direct, to defend, to assist and succeed you. *Be strong, my Son, in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus.* “The Lord send thee Help from his Sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of *Zion*.—The Lord fulfil all thy Petition.—He will hear thee from his holy Heaven with the saving Strength of his right Hand.”

I now turn my self and Speech unto the *Church of Christ*, of which this rising *Star* is the *Angel* elect;

Dearly Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ;

It is not long since you took up those Lamentations of the afflicted Church of old, *How hath the Lord covered the Daughter of Zion with a Cloud in his Anger!* — *He hath brought me into Darkness* †. This was done, when that radiant and benevolent *Star*, which of late shone so brightly, and shed such benign Influences upon you, in a Course of faithful ministerial Instruction, Government and good Example, did set in the Grave: Or, as I might rather say, was advanced by him that hath the *Keys of Death and HADES*, into a higher ORB, and placed among the *Morning Stars* of the upper World. *

† Lam. 2. 1. — 3. 2.

* The Reverend Mr. NATHANIEL EELLES, died suddenly August 25. 1750. Æt. 73.

“ One Star differeth from another Star in Glory ” :
 That, with the comfortable and enlivening Rays of which
 ye were favour'd for the Space of Forty-six Years, was
 of distinguish'd Lustre ; and it's Influences, how sweet
 and extensive ? The neighbouring Churches, yea, the
 Land, rejoyced with You in the Light thereof. There
 never was in this Country, if in the *Christian* World, a
 Minister so frequently sought to as your late deceased
 Pastor, when the Churches wanted Light and Peace :
 And his coming to their Help, in the way of *Ecclesiastical*
Counsel, wherein he, for the most part, *moderated*, might
 seem as the welcome Approach of *Mazaroth* in his
Season, or the kindly Aspect of a *benevolent Planet* with
 his *Satellites*. To be sure, the calm and pleasant Wea-
 ther, and Summer-fruitfulness, which this Church has
 enjoy'd, were by Means of his wise, steady, and gentle
 Ministrations : Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how
 holily, and justly, and unblameably he behaved himself
 among you : As ye know how he exhorted, and
 comforted, and charged every one of you, as a Father
 doth his Children ? — But, alas ! that burning and
 shining Light, little dimmed or diminished by Age,
 was suddenly extinguish'd from your Eyes. — And
 O, the mournful Darkness which then over-spread this
 Place ! — But lo ; He that is in the midst of the
 Churches, hath another *Star* in his right Hand, which
 he this Day giveth you : And he can make it to equal,
 yea, exceed the former in Brightness, and benign In-
 fluences. Receive with all Thankfulness such a Gift
 from the Father of Lights, coming to you thro' the
 Hand of a blessed Mediator ; and be exhorted to make
 an advantageous Use of it. — I can, from intimate
 Acquaintance, bear this young Man witness, (and I do
 it before this great *Assembly*, to provoke unto Emulation
 the *Candidates* for the Evangelical Ministry) that he hath
 taken laudable Pains to be thoroughly furnished unto the
 good,

good, but arduous, Work he designed for ; and by the Blessing of God on his preparatory Studies, hath acquired those desirable Qualifications, which have justly recommended him to your well-advis'd Choice of him for a Pastor, to feed you with Knowledge and Understanding. And I may, with little *Variation*, say to you of him, as *Paul* did to the *Philippians* concerning his Son *Timothy*, I know no Man like-minded, who will naturally care for your State. — “ See that he be with you without Fear, for he worketh the Work of God. ” Let not his Light be obscured by Poverty, or Reproach, that he shall suffer from you ; nor his Influence obstructed by the Hardness of your Hearts ; nor his Progress in the Course of his Ministry hindered by unreasonable Opposition. Let not your Minds be so blinded by the God of this World, or with the Mist of Prejudices, or the Dust of perverse Disputings, as that the Darkness of 'em should be impenetrable by the Rays of Gospel-Light. Open your Eyes to the Light, and yield to the Evidence of Truth, and receive the Impression of it ; and walk in the Light. The brightest Star is not ordained in the *Firmament* of the Church merely for People to gaze upon, to observe it's Motions, and admire it's Glitterings ; much less to boast of it's out-shining others, but to travel by, as the *wise Men* did by that which they saw, in the Way to *Christ* and Heaven. In vain will your Minds be irradiated with the clearest Knowledge, by that which shall shine here, unless your Feet be guided into the Way of Peace, of Righteousness, and Holiness. Let your Minister's faithful Directions, and good Example, for the Practice of pure and undefiled Religion, be carefully observed and practised by you ; and so ye also will shine as Lights in the World, holding forth the Word of Life ; that he may rejoice in the Day of *Christ*, that he hath not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. — Forget not to pray daily to God for him the Prayer of the Church, in *Psal. 80. 17. Let thy Hand be upon the*

the Man of thy right Hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou hast made strong for thy self. — Be willing to rejoice in his Light, not for a Season only, in it's first Appearance, but in it's Continuance and Encrease, till he shall have finished his Course with Joy. Let the Sight of him, going before you as a Guide to Christ and Glory, always affect you, as did that of Christ's Star the wise Men, who followed it from Arabia to Bethlehem, Mat. 2. 9, 10. Lo, the Star which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. — When they saw the Star, they rejoiced with exceeding great Joy. — So may He be your Light and Joy, and ye his Crown of Rejoycing. — O the mutual Congratulations with which he and you shall meet another Day, at the right Hand of Christ, who will give to both Places among them that stand by, as Witnesses of this joyous Solemnity, — the Angels of Light, — those Morning-Stars, which did, when the Foundations of the Earth were laid, and shall much more at the Consummation of all Things, sing together ; and shout for Joy.

And let the whole Assembly of Ministers and People here be incited to rejoice this Day in Christ Jesus, who walketh in the midst of the golden Candlesticks, and holdeth the Stars in his right Hand. God is the Lord, which hath shewed us Light ; bind the Sacrifice with Cords, even unto the Horns of the Altar. — Praise ye the Lord ; praise God in his Sanctuary : Praise him in the Firmament of his Power : Praise him, all ye Stars of Light. —

Now unto the Father of Lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect Gift, and with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, — Unto Him be Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages, World without End. A M E N.

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